

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2009

The Honorable John P. Murtha, Chair
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murtha and Ranking Member Young:

We are writing to recommend the initiation of a \$25 million blood cancer research program as part of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) at the Department of Defense (DoD), an effort that may provide important benefits for military personnel and veterans, as well as for other Americans diagnosed with the blood cancers and other forms of cancer.

It is fitting the CDMRP would include a blood cancer research program, because military personnel may be at heightened risk of developing several forms of blood cancers as a result of their exposure to chemical and biological agents. The links between these exposures and the blood cancers have been reported by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), and the Department of Veterans Affairs presumes these diseases to be service-connected for Vietnam veterans and offers medical and disability benefits to affected individuals. By providing funding and leadership for blood cancer research, the CDMRP can stimulate a creative and aggressive response to understanding the blood cancers and accelerating development of new treatments that will benefit military personnel and others.

Although blood cancer researchers have been eligible to receive funding through the omnibus peer reviewed medical research program, the availability of this funding has not resulted in a dedicated, comprehensive, and intensive research effort focused on blood cancers. A specific program for blood cancers holds the promise of fostering that sort of effort. Although the potential for addressing the health care needs of military personnel and veterans is adequate justification for a blood cancer program, such an effort holds promise for helping all cancer patients.

It is acknowledged that research on one form of cancer may yield basic or applied knowledge related to other cancers, initially developed for blood cancers are now used in treatment of solid tumors, and the basic research on blood cancers fuels basic research advances in other cancers, as well. An investment in blood cancer research through CDMRP may produce significant additional benefits beyond the diseases it specifically targets.

We urge the Subcommittee to fund the launch of a blood cancer research program at a modest level of \$25 million. This is a wise investment of federal funds for military personnel and other Americans diagnosed with blood cancers. We would be pleased to provide additional information about the status of blood cancer research and the opportunities that might be supported through a new DoD effort.

Sincerely,

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